



## 20th District **Legislative Update**



**State Representative  
Gary Alexander**



**State Representative  
Richard DeBolt**

Dear Friends,

We are now working through a 60-day legislative session with the intent of improving job opportunities for Washington's families. We received good news in December of Boeing's decision to assemble its new 7E7 Dreamliner here in our state. It's a good sign that efforts to attract jobs to Washington are beginning to pay off, but we can't forget about other employers, many who own small businesses that drive our economy in communities throughout our state.

We think we are on the right path to economic recovery. Continued diligence is needed to make sure we control the growth of government, maintain a tax and regulatory climate that is conducive to job creation, and ensure that families are working and have access to affordable health care.

These are our goals, and the issues addressed in this newsletter are important to achieving these goals on behalf of the families we represent. If you have questions about these or other issues of concern, we hope you'll take the time to contact us over the next several weeks.

It's an honor to represent you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

**Gary Alexander**  
State Representative

**Richard DeBolt**  
State Representative

**Toll-Free Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000**  
**TTY (Hearing-impaired Hotline): 1-800-635-9993**

# Rep. Richard DeBolt • Rep. Gary Alexander

## Creating jobs and restoring trust

The Legislature made important strides in the past year to help position our state to participate in the nation's economic recovery and improve our opportunity for job expansion. We have also sought to make government more accountable and rebuild trust with citizens who have lost faith in government's ability to respond to their needs.



While the 2004 session is scheduled to last only 60 days, we have a clear agenda for achieving our goals of creating jobs and restoring public trust.

## Improving our state's competitiveness

Despite our recent efforts to make Washington more competitive, our state's economic recovery continues to lag behind the rest of the country. We must continue to reform our state's tax and regulatory policies to make this a good place for employers to expand and bring new jobs.

We support reforms to improve accountability in the state's rule-making authority and to add fairness and predictability to our regulatory environment. It should be a policy of state agencies to respond to all permit applications within 90 days. People seeking to make investments in our state shouldn't face the uncertainty in time and expense when they are forced to wait years for state and local permits.

We need additional changes to our state's workers' compensation system - among the most expensive in the country - to protect workers while controlling costs. We also support expanded tax credits for start-ups and small businesses, which offer the greatest potential for long-term job growth.



### Some facts:

- **The Department of Labor and Industries is imposing a 9.8 percent increase in workers compensation premiums this year, following a 29 percent increase just one year ago.**
- **Boeing's payroll tax in Washington is \$772 per worker, three times the national average. It is \$482 per worker in Oregon, \$378 in California and \$105 in Kansas.**



***Once again, Rep. Alexander will play a key role in budget negotiations on behalf of House Republicans. He serves on the House Appropriations Committee and is the ranking Republican on the House Capital Budget Committee.***



***Rep. DeBolt was recently named House Republican leader, the top leadership post in the House Republican Caucus. He will head the leadership team that develops direction and priorities for House Republicans.***

## Fiscal responsibility

With 18 months left in the state's 2003-05 fiscal period, it's critical that we adhere to the balanced two-year operating budget adopted just last spring. As indicated by the governor's new supplemental budget proposal released in December, there will be a great deal of pressure to spend beyond our means and put taxpayers at risk.



We fought hard last session and successfully closed a \$2.7 billion budget deficit without tax increases. To retreat from this fiscally responsible approach would risk a tax increase and deep cuts in essential services for people who truly need government assistance.

Any budget expenditures this year should be limited to necessary adjustments, such as school enrollment growth and emergency needs, so that we maintain a responsible, sustainable budget that protects taxpayers.

### Some facts:

- **In 2003, lawmakers closed a \$2.7 billion state budget deficit without tax increases.**
- **The current budget provides reserves of \$488 million.**
- **The governor's proposed budget for 2004 would leave just \$172 million in reserves and would result in a \$1 billion deficit in the next biennium.**

## Maintaining access to affordable health care

While the vast majority of people have health care coverage, excessive regulation and skyrocketing costs have put our health care system on the brink of crisis. A majority of Washingtonians work for small businesses that are finding it increasingly difficult to provide employees with health coverage. Those who have coverage are finding it harder to find health care providers, especially in rural areas where doctors and hospitals are being forced to limit services or leave the state because of the

rising cost of doing business.



We want to lift the regulatory burdens on small businesses to make it easier for them to provide health care to their employees. It's also

critical that we address the enormous increase in medical malpractice insurance costs that are strangling the health care industry. There is too much money going to our legal system and not enough going to the care and well-being of families.

We also want to help families prepare for long-term care needs. The aging baby-boom generation has drawn attention to the importance of financial planning tools that will help us prepare for the growing expense of long-term care and protect families from being placed at financial risk when caring for loved ones.

## Strengthening our schools

We will continue to support efforts to achieve excellence in our schools and help students transition successfully to a higher education system that prepares them for high-demand, high-paying fields.

Changes are needed in the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) requirements to ensure that these standardized tests serve as a tool for effectively measuring progress toward higher academic achievement.

Critical to maintaining excellence is ensuring that we attract and retain quality teachers in the classrooms and avoid the disruptions caused by labor disputes that lead to illegal teacher strikes. The governor and attorney general have refused to uphold the law when these walkouts occur. The Legislature needs to stand up for parents, students and taxpayers of these communities that have been paralyzed by these strikes and adopt language which reiterates that these walkouts are unlawful.

### Some facts:

- **The Marysville teachers' strike lasted 49 days, resulting in the longest school closure in state history.**



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## **We want to hear from you!**

Because of election-year restrictions, we are limited in the amount of unsolicited information that we are allowed to send you in the coming months. In addition to this newsletter, we will be sending you one more update at the end of the 2004 session.

We can, however, answer questions or respond to any requests you may have at any time. It's important that you know we are here to serve you and help you in your dealings with state government. Please feel free to contact us if we can be of assistance.

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**More information and news about the Republican caucus can be  
found on the web at <http://hrc.leg.wa.gov>**

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